

ODHH Monthly Bulletin

November 2012

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A message from Director Lisa Kornberg

The clocks may be set back an hour beginning on Sunday, November 4, but at ODHH, we continue our work to move Maryland forward.

I am pleased to report that, as a result of a partnership with the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, we hosted two incredible workshops for jobseekers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Over 40 Marylanders were able to participate in the workshops and gain valuable knowledge about job seeking today. A special thanks to Sara Muempfer, Lloyd Day, Charlie Hunt, Lise Hamlin, and Hank Passi for making these workshops possible.

November is a busy month as we prepare to vote on Election Day (November 6) and recognize those who have served their country on Veteran's Day (November 12). November is also National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness month and there are studies being done right here in Maryland exploring the link between hearing loss and dementia. Finally, ODHH is hard at work with the Department of Budget and Management in developing a statewide interpreter contract. Please see the articles in this month's *Bulletin* for further information on each of these topics.

At the end of the month, many of you will celebrate Thanksgiving with your family and friends and reflect on the things for which you are grateful. On behalf of the staff at ODHH, I would like to thank all of you for your support this year. It does not go unnoticed, and we are grateful for our federal, state, local, and community partners.

-Lisa

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State Issues Visual Communication Services Request for Proposals



The State of Maryland is in the process of requesting proposals for a statewide Visual Communication Services contract to provide sign language interpreters and computer assisted real time transcription (CART) to its staff and constituents. The Maryland Department of Budget and Management (DBM) recently issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to providers of sign language interpreters and CART services.



It's Time to Vote!

Election Day is Tuesday, November 6, but there are many ways that you can cast your ballot. Check out [ODHH's voting video](#) for information in ASL. You can either vote in person during early voting or on election day, or you can vote by [absentee ballot](#).

Early voting starts Saturday, October 27, 2012 and runs through Thursday, November 1, 2012. Early voting centers are not open on Sunday. Each early voting center will be open continuously from 10 am to 8 pm each day. [Find out where to vote early for the 2012 elections](#). Anyone in line at 8 pm will be allowed to vote.

On election day, you can vote at your assigned polling place. If you do not know where your polling place is, please visit Maryland's [voter look-up website](#). Polling places are open continuously from 7 am until 8 pm. Anyone in line at 8 pm will be allowed to vote.

The RFP includes four services: on-site sign language interpreters, remote sign language interpreters, on-site CART, and remote CART. These four services are expected to result in multiple contract awards. The contracts to be awarded from the RFP will be for three years with options for two one-year renewals. Aside from being available for use by all State of Maryland agencies, the contracts may also be used by Maryland local governments, many not-for-profit organizations, and some governments outside of Maryland. The purpose of the contracts is to help the State and other governments and organizations contain costs associated with providing auxiliary aids and accommodations at an established rate. It is the hope of the Department that this new contract will make it easier for State personnel and others to request and provide the appropriate auxiliary aid. The terms of the RFP may be viewed on the [DBM website](#) or at the "News" tab on the [ODHH website](#).

"It is significant that the State recognizes the importance of meeting the communication needs of all of its residents, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind," ODHH Director Lisa Kornberg said. "Creating a statewide contract sends the message to all State Agencies that providing accommodations is a critical need that must not be ignored."

A pre-proposal conference was held on October 16, 2012. In attendance were State personnel from the Department of Budget and Management, the Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The pre-proposal conference was also attended by 20 people representing over a dozen prospective offerors for the RFP. The attendees were able to ask the DBM staff for clarification on the terms of the RFP. The answers to their questions are provided at the above links. In addition, possible amendments to the original RFP are under review. It is anticipated that contracts will be awarded and the services will be available in early 2013.

Veterans with Hearing Loss



The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) was established in 2001 to provide expertise related to Marylanders with hearing loss and to facilitate their ability to access resources and services. This includes providing information and support for Maryland's servicemen and women who have lost their hearing.

According to the Federal Veterans Benefits Administration, tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and hearing loss were among the most prevalent service-connected disabilities for veterans receiving compensation at the end of fiscal year 2009. During fiscal year 2009, 570,966 veterans received compensation for hearing loss associated with military service, and 639,029 received compensation for service-related tinnitus.

Veterans with hearing loss related to their military service may receive compensation benefits ranging from \$123 - \$2,673 per month, depending on the severity of the loss. If you are found to have a service connected hearing loss, the VA will also provide hearing aids at no charge.

- Tinnitus is also a compensable disability up to a maximum of 10%. \$123/month is the 10% compensable rating.
- Veterans filing disability claims with the VA should seek help from an accredited representative when filing for benefits. There are a number of national organizations, for example the American Legion and Disabled American Veterans (DAV), which have accredited representatives in and around the State.

If you are unable to vote during early voting or on election day, you may vote by absentee ballot. [Find out more information about absentee voting.](#)

Quick Links

[ODHH Website](#)



[Contact Us](#)

[Maryland.gov](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

ODHH on the Move

Operation Open House

November 3
10 AM - 3 PM
Charlotte Hall Veterans Home
Charlotte Hall, MD

Potomac Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Annual Conference

November 9 - 11
Columbia Double Tree Hotel
Columbia, MD

Maryland ASL Teachers Association Conference

November 10
9 AM - 9 PM
Towson University
Towson, MD

Mid-Atlantic Deaf and Hard of Hearing Festival

November 17
9 AM - 5 PM
Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, MD

Please note that ODHH

- The staff at the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Service & Benefits Program is also accredited with the VA to assist veterans and dependents with their claims. You can reach a Veterans Benefits Specialist at your [local Veterans Affairs Office](#).

There is a wealth of resources in the "[Veterans Information](#)" section of the [ODHH website](#). Questions about other services and programs for people with hearing loss? Contact the ODHH at [410-767-6290](tel:410-767-6290) (Voice) or orodhh@gov.state.md.us.

Study Links Hearing Loss and Dementia



November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness month. Did you know that seniors with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop dementia over time than those who retain their hearing? This is what a study by Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging researchers suggests. Researchers say the findings could lead to new ways to combat dementia, a condition that affects millions of people worldwide and carries heavy societal burdens.

Although the reason for the link between the two conditions is unknown, the investigators suggest that a common pathology may underlie both or that the strain of decoding sounds over the years may overwhelm the brains of people with hearing loss, leaving them more vulnerable to dementia. They also speculate that hearing loss could lead to dementia by making individuals more socially isolated, a known risk factor for dementia and other cognitive disorders.

Whatever the cause, the scientists report their finding may offer a starting point for interventions - even as simple as hearing aids - that could delay or prevent dementia by improving patients' hearing.

The new study, published in the February Archives of Neurology, focused on 639 people whose hearing and cognitive abilities were tested as part of the BLSA between 1990 and 1994. While about a quarter of the volunteers had some hearing loss at the start of the study, none had dementia.

These volunteers were then closely followed with repeat examinations every one to two years, and by 2008, 58 of them had developed dementia. The researchers found that study participants with hearing loss at the beginning of the study were significantly more likely to develop dementia by the end. Compared to volunteers with normal hearing, those with mild, moderate, and severe hearing loss had twofold, threefold, and fivefold, respectively, the risk of developing dementia over time. The more hearing loss they had, the higher their likelihood of developing the memory-robbing disease. Even after the researchers took into account other factors that are associated with risk of dementia, including diabetes, high blood pressure, age, sex, and race, hearing loss and dementia were still strongly connected.

The research was supported by the intramural research program of the National Institute on Aging.

Questions? Comments? Contact:

Julie Anne Schafer, Esq.
Deputy Director
Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
217 E. Redwood Street, Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202
[410-767-7793](tel:410-767-7793) (voice)
[443-453-5954](tel:443-453-5954) (VP)
julie.schafer@maryland.gov
<http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/>

will be closed on the following dates:

*Tuesday, November 6 in
Observance of Election
Day*

*Monday, November 12 in
Observance of Veterans
Day*

*Wednesday, November
21 - Friday, November 23
for Service Reduction
Day, Thanksgiving, and
American Indian Heritage
Day*

